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/For further information about changes and continuities in many specific aspects of Kamarakoto culture from aboriginal to modern times, see categories 177 and 178, pp. 273-279./

anything about such things," or "I never have thought about that." One informant said that the "wild, ignorant Indians," i.e. those unlike himself, used to believe in the surviving souls both of men and of animals and that the souls lived in the house of God, but that "intelligent Indians," i.e. those like himself, do not know whether this is so or not. The pseudo-Christian idea of survival in the house of God probably indicates that this is not a reliable statement of indigenous belief, even though it was disclaimed by the speaker and ascribed to the savages.

There are some slight traces of Christian influence, but these have not significantly affected the thought or life of the people and cannot be considered as the cause of the degeneration of native belief. The two or three Spanish-speaking Indians have acquired with that language a knowledge of the existence of the Christian religion and they show some tendency to wish visitors to believe that this doctrine is known and revered here, mainly because they think it an indispensable adjunct of civilization and dislike being considered uncivilized. One or two individuals claim to have been baptized, which is probable since they have lived in Venezuelan towns, and even to have baptized children themselves, which is not probable. They were, however, unable to explain any item of Christian doctrine, even the meaning of baptism, and I could not learn that this knowledge extends beyond the superficial aspects of that sacrament and recognition of the cross as a Christian symbol. At least one woman has a holy medal, which she wears as others do silver coins and which seems to have no more meaning for her. Several crosses have been erected on graves and one in front of the abandoned house of a dead man. In one place crosses were scratched at random on a mud wall, along with various profane sketches. There seems to be a receptive attitude toward Christianity and certainly no hostility, but this certainly is largely due to lack of any realization of how antagonistic that religion is to their present mode of life and habits of thought. For instance, at least one of those who expressed himself as most anxious for the introduction of Christianity is happily married to several wives.

As will by now be apparent, their own religion is almost completely non-ritualistic. It involves no true cult, no sacrifices or offerings, no religious buildings or altars, no images or other sacred objects, nothing in the nature of primarily religious services or ceremonies, no real worship, and no propitiation except as a few of the piache's activities might be so considered in a very broad sense. The contrast with the highly ceremonial and theistic Indian religions of the Andes, of Mexico, and of many other parts of North America is almost as great as can be.

Burial.

764 Burial customs are usually very revealing regarding religious beliefs and while those of the Kamarakotos, to the extent that I know them, are less so [128] than usual, they are best mentioned here. Since we were fortunate in that none [124] of the Indians died during our stay, my acquaintance is based on examination of graves[176] and statements of the Indians, checked and weighed as to their [178] reliability. Here the "progressive" policy of a few leaders is having a definite effect and it is necessary carefully to distinguish old custom from present tendencies.

766 A toʔ-esaʔ (head of a household group) is still often buried in his house and probably was invariably so interred in former times. Thus the former owner is buried in the abandoned dwelling at Uruyén and I have indicated his grave on the plan (Fig. 6A). This grave is built up with sticks and mud so that it projects about 50 cm. above the ground and must extend about an equal depth below the surface. The exposed superstructure is rectangular and about one meter square in plan. The body inside is said to be in a crouching position on its haunches, which is concordant with the otherwise peculiar form of the grave. [268] No one but the toʔ-esaʔ is buried in a house and since the house is always abandoned when its master dies anyway, no one lives in a house containing a grave. [268] There is, however, no apparent fear of this grave (or any other) or of the house, which is freely entered if occasion arises.

764 Persons other than a toʔ-esaʔ were not buried in houses but in the open nearby, each inhabited place usually having a patch of sabana that serves as a cemetery, although nothing but the presence of the graves distinguishes it. Everyone was formerly buried in a crouching position, but not in urns or baskets. [178] Now burial in the supine position is common, but this reflects the "progressive" influence. Only one body was, or is, placed in each grave. Sometimes items of personal property are buried with the body but this is neither usual nor obligatory. [268] Most personal property continues in use by other members of the household or, if not immediately needed, is abandoned and may be taken by any comer. Graves outside the house, like that described in a house, were formerly lined and roofed with sticks and mud so that dirt piled on top did not touch the body, but they did not generally protrude above the ground. This lining or roofing is still sometimes provided, but is no longer invariable. Some of the old houses with graves were burned, but this seems to have been rather a casual act or a mere accident from firing the sabanas than a ceremonial duty and certainly is not considered necessary.

765 It was formerly the custom to dig up the bones after an interval of about 178 a year, clean them, and keep them in a chest or basket, but this custom is said to have been entirely abandoned long since and we saw no evidence of it.

176 [see footnote on p. 328, category 116 — Analyst]

764 177 Although the body thus came to be left in the grave, no attempt was made to mark or maintain the site until very recently. Now a cross is sometimes erected — there are two in the cemetery at Uruyén and one grave (a prone burial) has a light cane railing around three sides. These are evident attempts to copy burials seen in Venezuelan villages, as reported by the two or three traveled individuals who have seen them. Of course no inscriptions are 769 used and no care is taken of the plots. There is no cult of the dead and no offerings are placed on the grave.

Notions of Time.

805 [177] The few relatively sophisticated, Spanish-speaking Indians are aware of the European calendar and system of reckoning time and will sometimes speak of months, hours, and other decidedly non-Kamarakoto concepts. It is evident, however, that even they have no definite means of telling what time it is and do not accurately know the hour or month or date. These foreign concepts are as yet quite unknown to the bulk of the tribe and of no practical use to the few who realize that they exist. The Kamarakotos have no definite time system. They recognize and designate the time of day by the height of the sun, and speak of dawn, morning, evening, early or late in the day, and so on, as we do when deprived of timepieces, but have no fixed subdivisions of the day. They reckon days for rather short intervals that are important to them, but keep no permanent or continuous record. They seem, for instance, to have no idea of how many days there are in a year and usually are quite unable to tell how many days have elapsed since an event more than a week or two in the past.

There is probably no recognized unit between the day and the year. Our interpreter spoke sometimes of months, but I could not observe that the Indians really kept any track of the phases of the moon or used them to reckon time, although I might be mistaken in this. They do, of course, recognize the year as a succession of one rainy and one dry season and within each of their two [82] seasons they are usually well aware of relative position. For instance, they can predict rather accurately when the season is due to change and they know at about what time various fruits will ripen, flowers bloom, birds lay eggs, and so on. No continuous record of years is kept and there is almost no perception of long spans of elapsed time beyond such expressions as "when I was young," "in my father's time," "when so-and-so built his house," and so forth. No Kamarakoto has any real idea of his own age or of that of his children. Even for young children the birth of whom was still vividly in mind, statements regarding age were often manifestly absurd.

In summary, the Kamarakotos appear to be about as completely devoid of any chronological sense, system, terminology or records as rational beings can be.

435 172. The literature, especially that of travel as opposed to scientific study, is full of ridicule of the Indians because they do not know the intrinsic worth of articles. These statements are usually naive because they show that it is the traveler, who did not know what "intrinsic worth" means. Except for jewelry and a few other uses unknown to the Indians, gold has no intrinsic worth. In our civilization, but not that of the Indians, it has an extrinsic worth as a token of the real value that it in itself does not intrinsically have. When an Indian picks up a nugget and trades it for a needle, he gets by far the best of the bargain on the basis of intrinsic worth: he gets something that he could not make and that is of great use to him for something that cost him no real work and that is worthless to him, and so gets something for nothing. It must not be supposed, however, that there are any Indians left, even beyond the limits of intensive exploration, who do not now have a better idea than this of the value (to the traveler) of gold, or of other articles of regular trade.

114 173. Koch-Grünberg, who seems to have penetrated farther than anyone
756 else into Carib religion, gives the texts of several Taurepán magic spells, but these were apparently common property and not exclusive to the piaches.

114 174. No mention was ever made of the use of a rattle, maraka, by the
534 piache and since this is almost universal and is indeed believed by some to be
755 the primary purpose of the maraka, I feared that I had missed an essential point.
[171] I now learn, however, on Koch-Grünberg's unimpeachable authority that Taurepán piaches do not use the maraka, and this must be true also of the Kamarakotos.

754 175. The following remarkable incident was related to me by Marie
123 Angel as having occurred during her previous visit to the tribe. One of the boys employed at the camp was seized by a kanaima and retired to his hammock to die. All entreaties to him fell on deaf ears and Mrs. Angel finally said in his presence, through an interpreter, that if he was going to die anyway she was not going to have him do so at length in her camp, that she was going to get a gun and if he was still in his hammock when she returned, she would put him out of his misery. When she approached with the gun, the boy suddenly sprang from the hammock and ran off, entirely cured. Since Indians do certainly die from such attacks, this anecdote is not to be taken as evidence that they are feigned.

● 764 176. But I did not open these because this would certainly have been re-
123 sented and the friendship of the living was far more essential to my work than this slight additional knowledge of the dead.